

## Nursing

Applications to nursing and midwifery courses at UK universities were at their lowest in five years for admissions in the 2024–25 academic year. UCAS figures at the June 2024 deadline showed 41,520 nursing applications, representing a 5.5% decrease from 2023 and down 26.7% from the post-pandemic boom of 2021. The figures for midwifery painted a similar picture, with 8,760 applications by the June 2024 deadline – down 9.9% compared with the previous year and 34.4% lower than the 2021 peak. Only in Wales did higher education institutions register an upturn in nursing applications, which rose from 3,330 in 2023 to 3,870 for 2024 entry. Royal College of Nursing general secretary and chief executive Professor Nicola Ranger said financial insecurity, high student debt and a lack of investment in nursing education could be behind the fall in applications.

But there are plenty of options available to those considering nursing courses – as evidenced by our Nursing table, which stretches to 76 universities – and the NHS Long Term Workforce pledge has set ambitious targets for student nursing intakes. “Nursing is about delivering safe, evidence-based care, which in the 21st century means student nurses will need a diverse range of skills and an ability to solve complex problems on an almost daily basis,” says Susan Ward, head of nursing, School of Healthcare Sciences, Cardiff University.

As a degree, nursing offers a near guarantee of employment on graduation and three universities in our table – Birmingham, Edinburgh and Wrexham – record a perfect 100% rate of graduates being employed in professional-level jobs or postgraduate study within 15 months of graduating. No universities registered lower than the 80.9% of graduates achieving these outcomes at Anglia Ruskin. Nursing is third in the employment table of 70 subjects, down from second last year and behind only veterinary medicine and medicine. Pay, though not an ingredient of our subject ranking, is a topic of especially hot debate in nursing. Average graduate salaries of £25,665 rank the subject 41st out the 70 featured in our *Guide*, a big drop from 27th place two editions ago.

Glasgow retains the lead in our subject ranking for the third consecutive year. It has the highest entry standards by some distance: 212 UCAS points and scores highly with its students, placing in the top ten for teaching quality and the broader experience – based on their responses to the National Student Survey (NSS). Edinburgh, No 1 for nursing three years ago, is runner-up for the second year running, just as Sheffield is in third place. Up 14 places to tie with Queen’s, Belfast in =5th place Wrexham is the top-ranked modern university, its position boosted by having the top scores for teaching quality and the wider university experience in our new National Student Survey analysis. Conversely, Gloucester comes bottom for each of these student-led metrics.

Results of the Research Excellence Framework 2021 assessment show that King’s College London (=27th overall) leads for research quality in nursing, followed by Manchester (=34th) and Southampton (=16th). In the QS World University Rankings by Subject, which focus on research and academic reputation and do not include measures for student satisfaction, King’s College is top in Europe for nursing and second in the world.

### Nursing

	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
1 Glasgow	86.7	84.4	63.5	212	97.2	100
2 Edinburgh	84	76	55.2	198	100	98.8
3 Sheffield	91.4	88.2	63.7	152	97.5	96.1
4 Keele	83.9	76.4	66.2	141	99.4	94.8
=5 Wrexham	97.9	97	1.5	–	100	93.6

=5 Queen's, Belfast	85.8	81.6	66.2	135	97	93.6
7 Surrey	81.4	76.4	58	148	97.6	93.4
8 Glasgow Caledonian	81.6	75.9	61	139	98.2	93.3
9 Northumbria	79.9	76.1	53.5	143	98.9	93.2
=10 Birmingham	75.8	65.4	55	147	100	93
=10 Leeds	74.7	68.8	65	150	98.1	93
=12 Swansea	66.9	58.7	66.8	157	99.4	92.8
=12 Hull	80.2	71.2	55.5	141	98.7	92.8
=14 Ulster	89.5	87.6	53.5	135	95.4	92.7
=14 Coventry	84.4	74.9	47.2	135	99.2	92.7
=16 Southampton	76	69.2	69.8	148	96.3	92.6
=16 Cardiff	74.2	66.9	58.8	163	96.4	92.6
18 Nottingham	78.5	71.6	66.8	139	96.6	92.2
19 Dundee	77.6	65.3	60.8	130	99.7	92.1
20 Exeter	76.4	58.7	54.5	153	–	92
21 Hertfordshire	86.7	82	48	117	98.8	91.8
=22 East Anglia	80.9	75.4	55.5	134	97.1	91.7
=22 York	78.2	75.2	65	141	95.2	91.7
24 Lincoln	74.6	68.1	55.8	138	98.4	91.5
=25 Derby	84.9	80.3	24	142	97.8	91.2
=25 Edinburgh Napier	81.4	78.3	40.5	136	97.4	91.2
=27 King's College London	78	71.2	76.2	141	92.7	91
=27 Bangor	65.4	55.9	59.8	150	98.7	91
=27 Kingston	81.1	76.8	38.5	135	97.7	91
30 Queen Margaret, Edinburgh	88.6	85.4	36.5	151	92.3	90.9
=31 Stirling	75.3	68.3	44	135	98.9	90.8
=31 Oxford Brookes	86	77.2	37.8	128	97.3	90.8
33 West London	86.1	78.7	29.5	134	97.2	90.7
=34 Plymouth	75.8	65.3	39.5	143	98.1	90.5
=34 Manchester	72.1	65.2	71.2	147	93.7	90.5
=36 Liverpool John Moores	78.7	72.6	26.5	148	97.3	90.4
=36 Robert Gordon	82.4	72.5	24.5	131	99.7	90.4
38 Liverpool	87.1	82.4	46.8	137	92.7	90.3
39 South Wales	77.4	65.7	25.2	149	97.6	89.9
=40 Portsmouth	75.5	69.8	41.2	130	98.2	89.8
=40 Salford	76.1	66.1	37	141	97.3	89.8
=40 Roehampton	92.7	88	37.5	102	–	89.8
=40 Greenwich	88.3	80.7	32.3	117	96.9	89.8
44 Staffordshire	80.6	72.8	30.8	123	98.9	89.7
45 Central Lancashire	77.7	72.7	35.5	140	96	89.6
=46 Brighton	71.8	63.4	50.5	130	97.9	89.5
=46 City	73.1	67.7	58	139	94.4	89.5
48 Birmingham City	74.9	68.5	37.8	133	97.4	89.3
49 Sunderland	82.7	75.2	30.2	124	96.7	89.1
50 West of Scotland	79.3	67.7	30.8	142	95.3	89
51 Chester	77.2	66.5	31	129	98.1	88.9
=52 Essex	83	76.3	28.5	114	97.3	88.5
=52 West of England	70.7	60	42.8	133	97	88.5

Nursing cont.

	Teaching quality %	Student experience %	Research quality %	Entry standards (UCAS points)	Graduate prospects %	Overall score
=52 Sheffield Hallam	70.7	62.8	29.8	128	99.5	88.5
55 London South Bank	83.9	77.4	34.5	126	93.9	88.4
=56 Teesside	77.3	68	35	126	96.3	88.3
=56 Huddersfield	73.4	69.3	22.5	136	97.5	88.3
=56 Canterbury Christ Church	78.6	65	31.8	124	97.1	88.3
=59 Wolverhampton	77.7	68.3	24.2	137	96	88.2
=59 Manchester Metropolitan	78.1	72.3	36	138	93.3	88.2
=61 East London	85	74.2	25.5	117	96.1	88.1
=61 Leeds Beckett	70.8	65.9	38	126	97.5	88.1
=63 Middlesex	85.2	79.9	22.5	115	96.1	88
=63 Bolton	80.1	74.4	2	140	97	88
65 Bournemouth	77.3	67.1	29.2	114	98.5	87.9
66 Bedfordshire	81.1	71.8	22.5	125	95.2	87.4
67 Northampton	81.1	75	5	136	94.7	86.9
68 Buckinghamshire New	86.9	80	16.8	110	94.6	86.7
69 Edge Hill	68.7	66.5	22.2	138	95.2	86.5
=70 Worcester	72.6	68.7	24.2	126	95.3	86.4
=70 Bradford	66.9	58.1	33.8	141	94.2	86.4
72 De Montfort	72.8	62.5	20.8	126	96.3	86.3
73 Cumbria	72.4	70.7	18.5	128	94.1	85.6
74 Suffolk	75.9	67.4	—	120	95.7	84.6
75 Gloucestershire	61.4	52.4	16.2	129	95.2	83.6
76 Anglia Ruskin	80.2	68.6	33.8	121	80.9	80.5

Employed in high-skilled job	89%	Employed in lower-skilled job	2%
Employed in high-skilled job and studying	4%	Employed in lower-skilled job and studying	0%
Studying	1%	Unemployed	1%
High-skilled work (median) salary	£25,675	Low-/medium-skilled salary	N/A

Pharmacology and Pharmacy

No 1 for the fourth consecutive year, Strathclyde in Glasgow's eminence in our Pharmacology and Pharmacy table is secured by the highest entry standards (224 points in the UCAS tariff) along with strong performances across all other measures in our ranking. Strathclyde offers degrees in all three of the subjects encompassed in this grouping: pharmacology – which is a branch of medicine concerned with drugs, their uses, effects and how they interact with the human body; pharmacy – which trains and licenses individuals to dispense prescription medicines as pharmacists; and toxicology – which is similar to pharmacology but focuses on the toxic rather than healing properties of venoms, poisons and drugs. Most English universities offer only one or the other, and courses are evenly split among institutions.

"Pharmacologists look for answers to viral pandemics, tropical diseases such as malaria and sleeping sickness, and venomous snake bites. Thanks to pharmacologists we can treat many conditions that used to be fatal. There are many more that still need research," explains Dr Andrew Fielding, senior lecturer in cancer research, Lancaster University.

King's College London (in 20th place overall) has the edge for research quality in our analysis of the Research Excellence Framework 2021 results. In our latest National Student Survey (NSS) analysis 24th-place St George's, London (now City St George's) achieves the highest rates of satisfaction with teaching quality and the broader experience, while third-place Ulster, the table's highest-ranked modern university, comes second for teaching quality and third for the student experience. At the opposite end of the scale, the least satisfied students for both NSS-based measures were at Central Lancashire (42nd overall).

The four-year MPharm degree is a direct route to professional registration as a pharmacist and the most popular option, or students can study three-year degrees in pharmaceutical science or as part of a broader degree. Pharmacology is available as a three-year BSc or as an extended course. Biology and chemistry are usually required by the leading universities, while maths, further maths and physics may also be useful. Applications to pharmacology and pharmacy degrees have rocketed since before the pandemic. There were 31,745 applications to pharmacy in 2023 (up by around 73% since 2019) and 10,100 applications to pharmacology (nearly 50% higher than in 2019). The spike in interest is timely; the NHS Long Term Workforce Plan, published in 2023, has pledged to expand training places for pharmacists in England by 29% by 2028-29.

Solid career prospects are in store for graduates. The subjects are usually in the top ten of our employment table but have slipped to 22nd out of 70 subject areas this year. The latest Graduate Outcomes survey found three-quarters of those with pharmacology and pharmacy degrees employed in professional-level jobs and/or furthering their studies within 15 months. Pay offers early career rewards: the subjects tie with veterinary science in third place of our pay index (behind only dentistry and medicine), based on average graduate salaries of £33,000.

Pharmacology and Pharmacy

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1 Strathclyde	83	80.3	65.8	224	93.1	100
2 Glasgow	80.3	79.3	63.5	197	—	97.5
3 Ulster	95.7	90.5	53.5	155	95.8	97
4 Queen's, Belfast	83.5	81.3	66.2	161	97.7	96.7
5 Dundee	93.9	92.8	60.8	—	88	95.7
6 Cardiff	86.7	75.5	58.8	161	97	95.6
7 Newcastle	85	82.5	65.8	139	97.5	95.2
8 Nottingham	85.2	81.5	66.8	151	92.7	94.6
9 Bath	82.6	84.9	63.7	147	92.3	93.6
10 Liverpool	87.9	84.2	46.8	149	95.3	93.5
11 Leeds	78	77.3	52	159	95.7*	92.7
12 Aberdeen	89.6	87.3	30.5	164	91.4*	91.9
13 Manchester	74.7	66	71.2	154	91.1	91.7
14 University College London	83.2	80.1	57.8	158	86.9	91.6
=15 Sunderland	89.7	79.7	30.2	130	100	91.4
=15 Robert Gordon	83.8	74.4	24.5	192	92.1	91.4
=17 Birmingham	86.9	80.4	55	140	89	91.2
=17 Swansea	76.4	75.6	66.8	145	—	91.2
19 King's College London	76.6	73.5	76.2	146	85.8	90.9
20 Keele	77.7	71.6	66.2	137	88.5	89.9
21 Glasgow Caledonian	84.6	78.3	61	160	79.3	89.8